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PHILOSOPHICAL
TRANSACTIONS.

- I. *A Letter from Mr. J. Moult to Dr. Percival, of Manchester, F. R. S. containing a new Manner of preparing Salep.*

S I R,

Read Jan. 12,
1769.

AS the specimen of Salep, which I left you some time ago, meets with your approbation, so far as to think it deserving to be laid before the Royal Society, I now send you my method of curing the common Orchis roots of our own country, so as perfectly to resemble what comes to us from Turkey. And if the communication be of any public utility, I shall think myself sufficiently gratified for the trouble I have had in prosecuting the experiments necessary thereto.

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The roots I have hitherto made use of, are those of the *orchis morio mas foliis maculatis* of Parkinson, the *cynorchis morio mas* of Gerard, and the *cynorchis major*, *vulgo* dog-stones: though, from a specimen of the *orchis palmata major mas* of Gerard, which you have among the Salep, that root likewise appears capable of being made to answer the same purposes as the others. The best time to gather the roots is, when the seed is formed, and the stalk going to fall; for then the new bulb, of which the Salep is made, is arrived to its full size, and may be known from the old one, whose strength is then spent by the preceding germination, by a white bud rising from the top of it, which is the germ of the plant of the succeeding year. This new root, being separated from the stalk, is to be washed in water, and a fine thin skin, that covers it, to be taken off with a small brush; or, by dipping in hot water, it will come off with a coarse linen cloth.

When a sufficient quantity of the roots is thus cleaned, they are to be spread on a tin plate, and set into an oven, heated to the degree of a bread-oven, where they are to remain six, eight, or ten minutes; in which time they will have lost their milky whiteness, and have acquired a transparency like that of horn, but without being diminished in size. When they are arrived at this state, they may be removed to another room to dry and harden, which will be done in a few days; or they may be finished in a very slow heat, in a few hours. I have tried both ways with success.

The orchis's above-mentioned grow spontaneously in this part of the country, and throughout the whole kingdom.

kingdom. They flourish best in a dry, sandy, barren soil. As the method of curing this root is so easy, I hope it will encourage the cultivation of so nutritious a vegetable, so as to reduce it from its present high price, which confines it to people of fortune, to one so moderate as would bring it into common use, like other kinds of meal or flour; and so become a valuable addition to our present list of eatables, its quality of thickening water being to that of fine flour nearly as $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 1, with this difference, that the jelly of Salep-powder is clear and transparent, whereas that of flour is turbid and white.

If this should find you in the same sentiments respecting it, I give you liberty to make use of it accordingly.

And am,

with all respect,

Your very humble servant,

Rochdale, Nov.
10, 1768.

J. Moulton.